
California Association of Wheat Growers

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**Written Statement of the California Association of Wheat Growers
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Cal-Fed Bay-Delta Public Listening Session
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The California Association of Wheat Growers appreciates this opportunity to comment on water, one of the most important issues facing farmers today. Our future is on the line, and the decisions of Cal-Fed must be balanced and fair.

Unfortunately Cal-Fed has drafted a misdirected plan that short-changes the people of California. It ignores Cal-Fed's stated purpose of a balanced water solution that would benefit both the people of California and the environment. The Cal-Fed document proposes extensive conversion of farmland that, in its words, will be "irreversible, irretrievable and unavoidable." Where is the balance?

The proposal to permanently retire nearly one-quarter of a million acres of farmland is shortsighted. Taking farmland out of production will affect farmers, farmworkers, truck drivers, cannery workers, warehouse workers, teamsters, people who operate businesses in rural areas, and consumers who benefit from a healthy, locally produced food supply.

The draft proposes taking water away from people, rather than developing new water supplies. Cal-Fed should look for ways to ensure that there is enough water available to meet the demands of California's growing population. It's not the farmer's fault that California's population is growing, and farmers should not pay the price by losing water supplies.

Water conservation is an important part of dealing with California's increasing demands on water, but it is not a sole solution. Conservation is not a limitless source of new water for the state. Farmers in California have already adopted most of the easy water conservation measures. Now all that's left are the difficult and expensive measures, and those aren't feasible when commodity prices are as depressed as they are now. More storage is a huge part of the answer.

New water supplies will be crucial for California's environment, especially during dry years. Cal-Fed should develop plans for more water storage in wet years, so we have it available for people and the environment during dry years.

Farmlands in some parts of the San Joaquin Valley face severe drainage problems. Cal-Fed does not address this. Drainage is key to keeping irrigated farming, and it must be part of the state's water solution.

Today's debate takes place after five straight wet years. Imagine how much more heated the debate will be during our next drought. Simply proposing to reallocate existing water without developing new storage is equivalent to rearranging the deck chairs on the Titanic. Cal-Fed must get serious about water storage, quality and drainage.